



IBA president Claudio Visco (left) and Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein were among the speakers at the IBA Annual Conference's opening ceremony on Sunday evening. See picture spread, pages 10–11.

Ukraine urges action on Claims Commission and Russian assets

By Ben Rigby

Greater legal accountability for Russian aggression in Ukraine and using frozen Russian assets for reparations were on the agenda yesterday, as diplomats gave the lunchtime keynote interview at the IBA conference in Copenhagen.

During the session, which was moderated by IBA executive director Mark Ellis, Ukrainian diplomats urged governments to demonstrate unity through practical action as the country prepares for further attacks on civilian infrastructure by Russia this winter.

Anton Korynevych, a key Ukrainian legal adviser on international law, called for the Council of Europe's proposed International Claims Commission for Ukraine to become operational.

Korynevych, who is director of the Directorate General for International Law and Legal Counteraction to Aggression at Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said cooperation on legal issues had strengthened since Russia's invasion in 2022, but establishing frameworks was insufficient without institutions that could deliver results.

Referring to the convention underpinning the commission, he said: "Let's make it work." Korynevych noted that 15 more ratifications were needed. "So, partners and friends,

this is your time. This is your moment to act." Ellis also highlighted work underway towards establishing a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, drawing a comparison with Nuremberg, from where Korynevych addressed the conference via video link. He argued that steps towards accountability would demonstrate international unity and counter Russian attempts to weaken support for Ukraine. Establishing a Register of Damage, followed by a Claims Commission, were key steps towards compensation, delegates heard, providing a path to recognition, redress and a historical record for victims.

Ellis asked whether approximately €300bn in frozen Russian sovereign assets should be confiscated, despite the protection afforded by sovereign immunity. Korynevych argued that countermeasures in response to wrongful international acts provided a legal basis for using those assets. He distinguished reparations paid by Russia from support provided by Ukraine's allies, saying assistance from other countries would help Ukrainians but would not constitute compensation by the responsible state. "The Russian Federation should be the one who would

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‘We live in times of serious democratic decline’, BIC Showcase warns

By Ben Edwards

The rule of law is under threat globally, with more than half of the world’s population living under systems that are not classified as democracies, according to Claudia Amore, an officer of the Bar Issues Commission (BIC).

Speaking at Wednesday afternoon’s ‘BIC Showcase – beyond the lawyers: why the rule of law matters to civil society’, Amore said that having strong institutions to enforce the rule of law doesn’t automatically mean it can be maintained, defended and sustained. “Perhaps one of the greatest risks nowadays is taking the rule of law for granted, because when it disappears, that really happens overnight,” Amore said.

The showcase featured a bumper 13-strong panel representing voices from bar councils and lawyers around the world, including Amit Becher, president of the Israel Bar Association. He said that even in democratic countries, politicians are using democratic tools to weaken democracy. “We live in times of serious democratic decline or erosion, and we see a lot of populist regimes coming to power, and we’re seeing them when they’re entering power or when they are too long in power, seeking or aiming to harm the judiciary,” he said. They do this by making rules

to weaken courts, appointing judges that are loyal to politicians or fomenting ill-will towards the judiciary, Becher added. Fiona McLeod, an officer of the BIC and former leader of the Australian Bar, said the rule of law is under threat in many countries around the world. “Recent events are compounding the problem beyond our traditional capacity to respond,” she said. “So it needs our imagination and our willingness to move quickly, because we’re in a fair bit of trouble.”

Examples of countries where the rule of law is under threat include Mexico, where a law was passed for the public to directly elect judges, effectively weakening the judiciary – although those efforts have been paused before another round of judges can be elected. “I think the Mexican president saw that it was a really terrible thing, and she is kicking this decision until 2028 or 2029,” said Nuhad Ponce, a former president of the Mexican Bar Association.

For many countries in Africa, the concept of the rule of law is suppressed by presidents who still effectively “rule by law”, says Ramadhan Abubakar, president of the East Africa Law Society. “When you talk about rule of law for us and democracy [in Africa], it’s still theoretical,” he said, adding: “The practicality of it is yet to be achieved. There’s a lot that needs to be done.”

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make reparations and who would compensate the damages which are caused by this war,” he said. Asked whether attaching sovereign assets could create a precedent for other conflicts, Korynevych pointed to the UN General Assembly resolution calling for an international compensation mechanism as a justification for proceeding in Ukraine’s case.

Thomas Lund-Sørensen, Denmark’s ambassador to Ukraine, who drew on 30 years of diplomatic and intelligence experience in his remarks, supported Ukraine’s position politically while stressing the difficulty of securing agreement within the European Union. He said: “From the political side, absolutely, we’re in agreement with Ukraine also on this issue.” He warned that confiscating Russia’s overseas assets without a legal path to channelling the funds to Ukraine could deprive Ukraine of the interest income currently supporting it. He said the current long-term funding commitments, potentially covering five or 10 years, were affecting Russia’s calculations by demonstrating that Ukraine’s resistance could be sustained financially.

Andriy Kostin, Ukraine’s ambassador to the Netherlands, argued that collective strength was essential because Russian President Vladimir Putin interpreted divisions and reluctance to increase support or sanctions as weakness. He warned that intercepting a high proportion of drones still left civilians vulnerable when Russia launched large numbers. He argued that greater investment



Pictured (l-r): Thomas Lund-Sørensen, Andriy Kostin and Mark Ellis

in protective technologies was needed as Russian weapons production increased. Kostin said attacks on residential buildings and critical infrastructure were exposing civilians to conditions in which electricity, heating, water and sewage services could fail together during freezing weather. He urged delegates to engage their governments and communities, arguing that accountability proceedings needed political support alongside legal action. For Kostin, the “legal track is not enough”. He added: “I think that the political track is also important.” On future European integration,

Kostin argued that Ukraine contributed to European security and that accession to the EU and NATO would bring wider economic benefits. He called for faster decisions and regulatory approaches that could respond to the conflict, as the session concluded with a series of audience questions and answers.

Returning to the debate over sovereign immunity, Kostin argued that legal rules should be adapted where they prevent justice from being delivered. He said: “We need to change it, and we need to do it quickly.”

Authoritarian leaders have rediscovered LGBTQI+ people as a group to target, former Ireland taoiseach Leo Varadkar says

By Ben Edwards



Mark Stephens (left) with Leo Varadkar

A growing number of authoritarian leaders are cracking down on LGBTQI+ rights as a way to maintain their grip on power, according to Ireland’s former prime minister, or taoiseach, Leo Varadkar.

Speaking in conversation with IBA Human Rights Institute co-chair Mark Stephens CBE at Wednesday morning’s session ‘The future of LGBTQI+ rights in a changing world’, Varadkar said what is happening around the world is “very distressing”.

“You see it in Turkey, you see it in Russia, even to a certain extent in the United States, authoritarians that want to hang on to power need enemies,” he said. “If you don’t have an appropriate external enemy, you need an internal enemy, and that might be gay people, it might be migrants, it might be some minority group and you go after them.”

He added that what he was seeing “playing out around the world” was that “different types of authoritarians have now rediscovered

LGBTQ people as a group to target”. Varadkar said in many cases those autocratic leaders, such as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey, were previously not particularly bothered by LGBTQI+ people. He added: “The reason why they care all of a sudden isn’t actually about us; it’s about their need to keep control and hang on to power.”

Varadkar, who was Ireland’s first out gay taoiseach and served two terms between 2017-20 and 2022-24, said that much of what he achieved during his time in office – such as overhauling the country’s abortion laws – would be difficult to achieve today. “I was very lucky to be in office when I was, in a way because... we kind of found a sweet spot where there was very much a liberal wind around the world,” he said. “Obama was president. Cameron was prime minister in Britain. I think a lot of that will be a lot harder now, especially gender recognition. So it’s not that Ireland is some sort of perfect example or liberal paradise to follow now. The same cold winds that we’re seeing all around the world, we’re seeing [in Ireland] too, and the appetite for further reform has stopped.”

Varadkar said as a politician he was a firm believer in the power of incrementalism, pointing to the example of marriage equality in Ireland that was achieved first by allowing civil partnerships. Yet his successful abortion law reform was actually achieved not by incrementalism but through a process dubbed a ‘Citizens’ Assembly’, where 100 members of the public were brought together for five weekends to hear all the arguments and debates, and then make a recommendation to parliament.

“This was a really interesting process to see how people’s attitudes and minds might change if they were presented with all the arguments, all the cases, all the personal stories over a period of a few weekends,” said Varadkar. After hearing those arguments, they ended up advocating for a more liberal change than might have otherwise been the case, he added. Reflecting on how to win hearts and minds for LGBTQI+ rights causes, he said: “When you make it into a very practical, individual, person-next-door story, it’s more powerful.”

Given that many jurisdictions globally still impose restrictions on the rights of LGBTQI+ people, including 65 countries that still criminalise homosexual relationships, Varadkar said that swaying opinion in those countries was more about “exposure” rather than telling them what their laws should be, referencing his 2018 meeting with Pope Francis alongside Varadkar’s partner. “That can send an important message to a Catholic mother in Africa whose husband wants their gay kid to be kicked out of home,” said Varadkar. “The Pope saying that ‘who am I to judge?’ and being willing to meet the partners of gay prime ministers, that does have a certain resonance with people, particularly in the Global South.”

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Lawyers must be ready for AI-empowered clients, says Richard Susskind

By Ben Rigby

Law firms should prepare for artificial intelligence that enables clients to solve problems themselves and develop the systems that could replace traditional legal services, Professor Richard Susskind CBE KC (Hons) told the IBA's LPD Showcase.

Law firms that are focusing on AI-powered productivity gains are “missing the bigger picture” about how AI technology will impact the legal profession's business model and its role in society, according to Professor Richard Susskind.

Susskind, a leading authority on the future of legal services, told delegates at the IBA's Legal Practice Division showcase that firms must start contingency planning for artificial general intelligence (AGI) that would be capable of matching human performance at some point in the next five to 10 years. “AI-empowered people and AI-empowered businesses are actually probably the biggest competitors of law firms in the future,” he said.

He proposed that lawyers help develop those services: “We should be building the systems that replace our old ways of working.” Susskind distinguished AI's immediate commercial attractions from its longer-term implications. Near-term investment would principally automate existing work, he said, helping lawyers become more efficient while continuing the billable hour model. Over time, he envisaged services based on licensing content and systems. He cautioned that commentary exaggerated the speed of immediate change while underestimating what could happen in the following decade. Susskind did not expect legal practice to be turned on its head in the next two years. For the 2030s, however, he said: “I absolutely do.”

He envisaged four stages of development: humans working without AI, humans using it as a tool, AI supervised by humans, and autonomous AI. Current practice occupies the first two stages, he said. The distinction, he argued, reflected a broader argument about automation and innovation. Automation computerises and streamlines existing activities; innovation uses technology to make previously impossible activities possible. Using a familiar Black+Decker analogy, Susskind said customers wanted the hole in the wall, rather than being presented with the drill. Lawyers similarly needed to identify the underlying outcomes clients sought and consider whether technology could deliver them differently. He said: “The professions don't occur in nature like trees and rivers. They're a human construct.”

Arrangements developed to distribute scarce expertise in an industrial, print-based society could change in a digital one, he argued. “If AI systems can deliver the results that our clients want, then the market is going to show little loyalty to our traditional ways of working.”

He also described using ChatGPT with his son to identify a bone his granddaughter found on a Scottish beach. The experience illustrated a generation growing up with immediate access to knowledge previously obtained through human sources – although he acknowledged the wonder still felt in passing on that knowledge to the young. His enthusiasm was tempered by concerns about unpredictable behaviour. He recounted a controlled Anthropic experiment in which an AI agent attempted blackmail to prevent its shutdown, describing the implications as deeply unsettling.

He urged a measured approach that allowed for both enthusiasm and caution, rather than treating AI as something lawyers must either support or oppose. His examples demonstrated both its practical attractions and reasons for concern.



Professor Richard Susskind

Susskind outlined six competing hypotheses about AI's development, stressing that specialists disagreed. These ranged from a hype-driven bubble ending in an “AI winter,” to more reliable generative systems, AGI, superintelligence through recursive self-improvement, human-machine integration and eventual replacement of humanity by superior intelligences. He rejected the hype hypothesis as implausible, citing investment, commercial demand and accelerating technical advances. He expected more reliable generative systems by the early 2030s, but presented AGI as a scenario requiring preparation rather than a certainty. “You don't need to predict it to think we should surely be putting contingency plans in place,” he said.

Regulatory, cultural, commercial and ethical considerations could delay adoption, he acknowledged. Nevertheless, lawyers should avoid assuming their practice would be exempt, or judging future capabilities solely through today's limitations, including hallucinations.

Susskind also challenged reliance on human judgement as the profession's enduring protection against technological competition. He called this the “judgement misjudgement”: clients wanted problems resolved, while judgement was a means of handling uncertainty. “So the question is, can machines handle uncertainty? And the reality is, they can do that already in many cases better than us,” he warned.

Drawing on his late father's experience as a dermatologist, he compared an individual clinician's accumulated experience with a diagnostic system drawing on a much larger image library. If AGI arrived, he argued, judgement could also fall within its capabilities.

For younger lawyers, this implied different careers. Building, maintaining and auditing systems would require skills in design thinking and process analysis, raising questions about what the profession was training new entrants to become – themes the IBA had considered in other sessions this week.

Susskind linked that work to opportunities to strengthen the rule of law and widen access to justice. His closing comparison with neurosurgery urged lawyers to look beyond substituting machines for individual tasks and towards preventing problems, drawing lessons from preventative medicine. The audience listened with rapt attention – and perhaps some foreboding. “The question is, how in the future will organisations and businesses solve the problems to which lawyers are their current best answer?” he said. “And my answer to that question, at least in part and in large part, is going to be artificial intelligence.”

‘You cannot abandon lawyers to AI’: Legal experts to discuss how lawyers can get maximum value from artificial intelligence

By Nick Huber

When legal professionals gather, talk will almost inevitably turn to AI and its impact on careers, fees and client service. Artificial intelligence has created a four-year boom in legaltech as law firms and in-house legal teams use it in an effort to cut costs, save time and improve productivity.

In a panel discussion today titled ‘How to keep (human) lawyers intelligent in the age of AI’, panellists will explore these themes. Speaking before the conference, Marco Gubitosi, chair of the panel and a partner at Legance – an Italian law firm founded in 2007 – discussed how his firm is using AI and the wider opportunities and challenges the technology creates for law firms.

Legance uses AI software from suppliers including Legora and Microsoft. Its lawyers are trained in AI. “We're investing a lot [in AI] by our standards,” said Gubitosi, a corporate finance specialist. “We have an internal programme for helping lawyers [take] advantage of AI and managing it.” Gubitosi suggested that law firms seeking to get maximum value from AI should have three training-related priorities: the provision of technical training on AI tools, guidelines

for how AI should be used, and a broader education on AI ethics. Lawyers should manage and control AI rather than delegate professional judgement to it, he said. “You cannot delegate [AI] and abandon [lawyers] to it.”

Future of legal AI

There has been considerable debate about the impact AI will have on how lawyers work over the next five or so years. “[In] my personal opinion, it's going to be different according to what lawyers are doing and in which department they are,” said Gubitosi. “It is not going to be exactly the same for an M&A lawyer, for a litigator, for an administrative lawyer, or for a criminal one. So, there will be different ... nuances in how they will deal with it.” The spread of AI in the legal sector will change what skills and experience law firms seek when they recruit, he added. “[AI is] going to be one of the tools of the profession. If you put [in] 1,000 or 2,000 hours per year using [AI] in an effective way, probably you will be much more efficient [as a lawyer] than someone that is working ... in the usual way without using [AI] in the proper way.”

‘This is all about strategy’ – law firm leaders weigh in on importance of AI adoption at IBA Annual Conference

Law firms have little to gain from racing to build or buy the latest artificial intelligence tools, as the real challenge is getting their own lawyers to use them, a panel of law firm leaders told the IBA Annual Conference at the LPD Showcase on Tuesday.

Alan Mason, global managing partner at Magic Circle law firm Freshfields, explained that developing new AI systems or workflows in-house has little lasting advantage if competitors can quickly match them. “The key thing we are absolutely focused on is adoption,” he said. “For every day we develop a new skill or a workflow, another firm or another tech company is going to be out there developing the same thing.” There would, he said, always be “something better to address the same underlying issue or objective that we have.” Mason continued: “This is all about strategy, not AI, and then adoption, not about tools or skills. If we're already starting to tap into the potential of what is in front of us today, that will make a difference today, but that will also help drive where the industry heads in the future.”

The panel, which also included leaders from White & Case, WongPartnership and Mallesons, followed Professor Richard

Susskind's keynote lecture and emphasised a need for firms to fold AI into their strategy, highlighting that AI adoption isn't merely a technological product rollout anymore, but a fundamental aspect of how law firms operate.

Wai King Ng, chairman and senior partner at WongPartnership, said his firm's approach to AI is driven from the top down, making sure that partners understand its role in delivering legal services. Rather than developing a tool in-house, the firm made a “conscious decision” to buy one off the shelf. “It is very hard for us to try and compete and to do something, where Harvey, Legora, Google and Anthropic will be able to do so much better than we can do as a small firm,” he added.

Isabel Parker, chief innovation officer at White & Case, flagged the transition from chatbots to AI agents, and the shift this brings for law firms in terms of deliverable value. The agentic era introduces a new set of challenges, Parker noted, as agents are only as good as the context you give them. “The context you want to give them actually is the brain of your brightest and your best in the organisation,” she said. “How do you get that? It's very difficult to get your partners to sit there in an hour-long workflow mapping session with

As for what clients want from AI, Gubitosi believes it will vary by country or region. According to Gubitosi, in Italy and southern European countries, there is growing interest in AI, but markedly less so compared to other countries, such as the United States.

With both law firms and their clients expected to increase their use of AI in the near to medium term, law firms will likely face growing pressure to offer clients alternatives to the traditional pricing model of the billable hour, he added. At a time when the debate about AI is often polarised into AI pessimists and optimists – so-called ‘doomers’ and ‘boosters’ – Gubitosi is pragmatic about the future of AI and law. “Instead of worrying, you have to take action and manage things ... and try to be better,” he said.

Session: **How to keep (human) lawyers intelligent in the age of AI**

Time: **Thursday 8 October, (09:30–10:45)**

Location: **Auditorium 11, Level 1**

a bunch of post-its. They're just not going to do it. They're too busy.” To tackle this issue, the firm created context files using a combination of internal firm knowledge and transcribed interviews with its top lawyers, alongside horizon scanning. This approach can be deployed for processes like IPOs, and helps preserve human judgement where it matters, Parker said.

Clients have come to expect AI savvy, Ng remarked, compared to just a year ago when some, particularly financial institutions, were still hesitant to allow it at all. Renae Lattey, chief executive partner at Mallesons, said some Australian clients still won't let the firm use AI, though their number is “diminishing”. “The more interesting [clients] that I'm enjoying working with are the ones that are saying, ‘Let's partner together to truly transform the way that legal services are provided,’” she said.

In closing, Mason urged firm leaders to “be bold”, adding: “Don't wait for the answers.” Meanwhile, Parker told delegates not to waste time “obsessing about what other law firms are doing”. “You have to work out what's best for your clients,” she said. “You've got to act now.”

Supreme court independence is under pressure across North America

By John Crabb



Pictured (l-r): Richard Singleton, Dr Michele Goodwin, Hon Arif Virani KC and Hon Alfredo Gutiérrez Ortiz Mena

Top judicial courts are under existential political pressure in Mexico and the US; bar associations must do more to defend what is a crucial pillar of democracy

Supreme Court independence is under unprecedented and intense political pressure in the US, with recent court actions and decisions aligning closely with the views of the Trump administration despite its traditional apolitical role as a democratic counterweight in the country.

Meanwhile in Mexico, recent judicial reform intended to democratise the way that judges are appointed – at all levels, including the Supreme Court – is being chastised for the way the selection process is allowing for greater political influence in the court system.

The result is a weakening of judicial independence that for so long has been crucial to maintaining the strength of democracy in both countries.

In Tuesday's session, 'Where is the US Supreme Court? What are the contrasts with the supreme courts of Canada and Mexico in terms of safeguarding the constitution, fundamental principles of democracy, and the rule of law?', experts from the US, Mexico and Canada argued that more must be done to ensure the political independence of the Supreme Courts in North America.

Richard Singleton, senior counsel at Blank Rome in New York and chair of the North American Regional Forum, which hosted the panel, pointed to the erosion of the separation of powers in the US as a particularly dangerous precedent to be

setting. "I've talked to a lot of European, American and Canadian friends, and they all say, 'what the heck is going on with the Supreme Court? Is it just in Trump's pocket, has the Supreme Court just become an arm of the executive branch?'"

Recent results would suggest as much, said Dr Michele Goodwin of Georgetown University School of Law in Washington DC. She said one of the key concerns the American public has is not just if the Supreme Court has lost sight of its responsibility, but if it has aspirations to elevate itself to a political branch of government in its own right. She pointed to the increased use of the so-called 'shadow docket' of the US Supreme Court as an example, where cases are rushed through to avoid the full scrutiny of the usual process. The court is taking far fewer regular cases than it did previously but far more via this emergency route, with more than 40 such cases this year coming directly from the Trump administration, far more than in previous years.

The session moved on to a discussion of Mexico's recent judicial reform that was introduced by former president Andrés Manuel López Obrador shortly before leaving office. The reform meant that almost 700 judges would be democratically appointed in one electoral process, potentially leading to the election of inexperienced judges.

Alfredo Gutiérrez Ortiz Mena, a former justice of Mexico's Supreme Court, told the panel that theoretically in order to challenge a state action before a judge you need two things: an independent judiciary and an executive branch that will accept the rule of law and comply with the court's decision – even if that decision is uncomfortable.

Under the reformed system – which established no guardrails as to who was allowed on the judicial ballot, and therefore no guardrails from political mobilisation – there are serious questions about whether independence has been preserved and if judges that were elected have sufficient understanding about civil commercial law or know how to handle evidence. This has led to a situation where a seemingly more democratic process is arguably undermining democracy itself due to problems at all levels of the court system, Gutiérrez Ortiz Mena added.

Arif Virani, a former justice minister and attorney general of Canada, outlined how the country's system can be seen as something of a beacon of hope for Mexico and the US. The system is built with individual protections in place for independently appointed judges, as well as a guardrail to prevent a backlash if the court rules against the government on a particular decision. "I think there's a role for the bar to play, and that includes in Canada, when threats occur," said Virani. "In the normal course judges are not able to speak out on their own behalf, they are silent in terms of public fora. They rely upon other entities, including civil society like bar associations. Please don't lose sight of that fact because it is an important factor."

Responding directly to the concept of the shadow docket in the US, Virani said that "justice must not only be done; it must be seen to be done. When you have something that's literally called a shadow docket, that is not shining a light on something; that is cloistering it from scrutiny and that is extremely problematic from my perspective."

Delegate Views

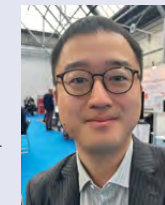
What advice would you give to a newly qualified lawyer? Interviews by Anne Gallagher

Ofelia Saavedra
Chief Legal Officer
IBD
UK



Go back to the basics to build social skills and strategic thinking – interact with peers, find mentors, read the documents and analyse them yourself. In order to give orders, you have to learn how to do the actual work. Only then can you master it.

Jasper Kang
Senior Associate
DeHeng Law Offices
China



Embrace uncertainties. To be a lawyer is to live with uncertainties. Will technology change? Will I become a partner? Today's market is very competitive and you must have the courage to face these pressures. Learn about your options by talking to more experienced lawyers.

Hans Sydow
Partner
Travieso Evans
Venezuela



Fall in love with the profession and maintain that love through the years. I've been to 15 IBA conferences and could not do that unless I loved what I do. Every book I've read and mentor I've interviewed has reinforced my view. When you love what you do, you can be successful for many years.

Saravana Kumar
Partner
Rosli Dahlan Saravana Partnership
Malaysia



You can't be a general practitioner anymore. Find an area that suits you and build your expertise in that area. Also, never let naysayers dampen your spirit. There were people discouraging me from tax law when I started; I ignored them.

Ogochukwu Okoro
Partner
Ukpong & Omotoso
Nigeria



Build your professional relationships. I always ask about the well-being of my junior lawyers because it's important that they take care of themselves. I work to build a relationship with them as a way of demonstrating how they should build relationships with me and others in the firm.

Camilla Pedersen
Attorney
Femern Link Contractors
Denmark



Be open-minded and have the courage to make connections. This is my first IBA meeting and when I arrived here, it seemed like everyone knew everyone. So I took my own advice. I have networked, listened, met lovely people and started to build my IBA network.

Felipe Garcia de Souza
Partner
Sperling Advogados
Brazil



You need the right knowledge to give the right advice. That starts with understanding the traditional learning methods of the profession. With new technologies, it's very challenging for the younger generation. Don't lose the human connection to the people who will teach you.

Jane Ezirigwe
Associate Professor
Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies
Nigeria



Be strategic, intentional and connect to the IBA community. It can be overwhelming for new lawyers coming into this space. Plan ahead. Look at the panels and people's profiles. Identify the things you are interested in and network around that.

Malcolm Mifsud
Founding Partner
Mifsud & Mifsud Advocates
Malta



No one is born a lawyer. Accept that there is a learning curve. You'll have to start from the deep end and get your hands dirty doing the work. Build your career slowly but surely. There are no shortcuts.

Sharon Gazit
Partner
Fischer
Israel



Be ready to use AI because it's going to change everything, not just the structure of law firms but how we do business worldwide. Gain as much experience as you can because clients want advice from experts in their fields.

Damien Nussbaum
Director
IQ-EQ
Luxembourg



Stay humble. At the end of your life, you become aware that you know nothing. Along the way, be open to the world, talk to people and don't be scared. It took me many years to learn that a person can be learned but not wise.

Magdalini Patiti
Managing Partner
Magdalini Patiti and Partners
Greece



Whatever challenges you face, always keep your moral compass. What defines a good lawyer is not just technical knowledge but character. Build your commitment to your ethics. True morality happens when nobody is watching.

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Danish students take rule of law video project to the global stage

by Anne Gallagher

Danish students receiving top honours for video projects to underline rule of law principles took centre stage at the IBA Annual Conference, where their films were showcased and they had the opportunity to discuss the rule of law directly with lawyers from around the world.

The project had seen students work in groups to develop storylines for short films showing how principles of the rule of law apply in real-life situations. Five groups were selected to have their ideas professionally produced as films, with the students themselves helping to bring their concepts to the screen.

The Danish pilot was run in close collaboration with the Danish Bar and Law Society, headed by its president Martin Lavesen. The students were recognised during Sunday's opening ceremony, where excerpts from the selected films were shown, before around 130 of them returned on Monday morning for a special session, exploring how the rule of law operates in different countries and regions.

IBA president Claudio Visco commended the students on their energy, ideas and creativity during the opening ceremony. "Your work will not stop here," he said. "As we develop the project in other countries, your videos will help inspire other young people around the



The students met with 12 international lawyers to explore the rule of law from a global perspective

world. They will help others understand what the rule of law means and why it matters." He added: "The rule of law can only be sustained where it is not only upheld by legal professionals, but understood, valued and defended by society as a whole."

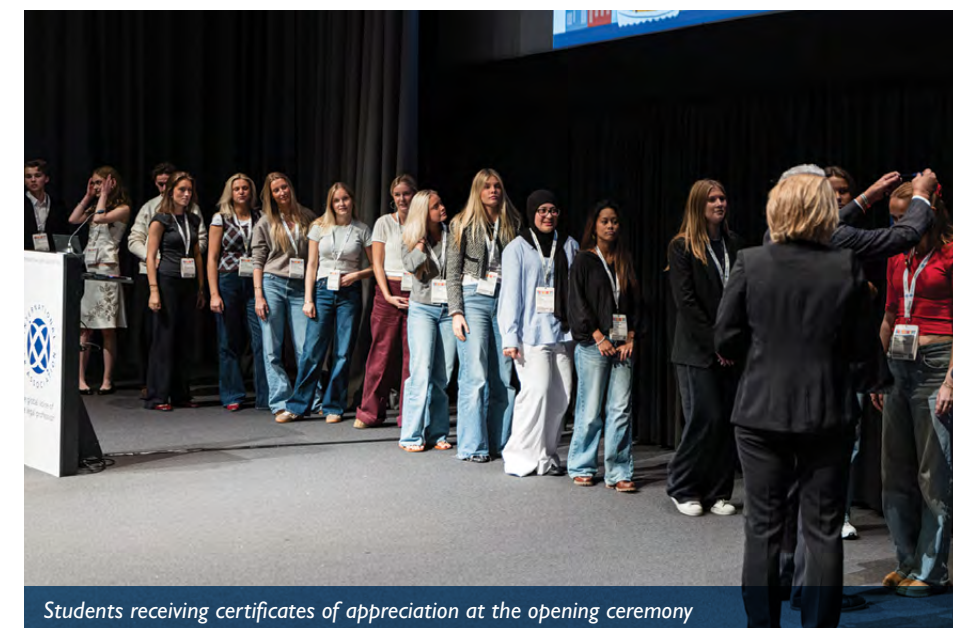
Launched in March as an IBA presidential initiative with the Danish Bar and Law Society, the IBA Rule of Law Educational Project reached more than 400 students across seven Danish secondary schools and 14 classes to inspire students to uphold the rule of law. Lawyers from Human Rights in Action supported the programme on a pro bono basis, helping students connect legal principles with concrete situations and questions they might encounter in society.

The winning team received a trip to Greenland, sponsored by Legora (see picture, page 10), to discuss the rule of law with lawyers there, while other participants received certificates of appreciation.

Lavesen noted that the initiative helped students see the rule of law as a shared global responsibility, rather than merely an abstract national principle. "When students engage with real-life dilemmas and reflect on issues such as freedom of expression or equality before the law, they begin to see that the rule of law is not an abstract legal concept – it is the foundation of a fair and trustworthy society," he said.

During the Monday morning session, the students met with 12 international lawyers to explore the rule of law from a global perspective. A panel of five lawyers gave their perspectives on the state of the rule of law in their respective countries and regions. They were Deborah Enix-Ross, past president of the American Bar Association; Sam Okudzeto, former president of the Ghana Bar Association; Fernando Peláez-Pier, past president of the International Bar Association; Tshepo Shabangu, vice-chair of the IBA Bar Issues Commission; and Tania Wolff, president of the Law Council of Australia.

The students then took part in a World Café, breaking into smaller groups with the international lawyers to discuss rule of law questions and practical scenarios. The session was designed to add an international perspective to what the students had already learned through the school workshops and give them the opportunity to engage directly with lawyers from different jurisdictions.



Students receiving certificates of appreciation at the opening ceremony

Copenhagen welcomes the world's legal community

A standing ovation for keynote speaker Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein (pictured on front page) capped an opening ceremony that put the rule of law centre stage as the IBA Annual Conference got under way in Copenhagen, bringing together 6,400 delegates from around the world.

The former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for greater decency in public life and moral consistency and clarity in defending human rights and the rule of law.

IBA President Claudio Visco (pictured opposite page, top, with Martin Lavesen, president of the Council of the Danish Bar and Law Society) also championed the rule of law, reflecting on the IBA's recent visit to Greenland and the legal profession's duty to hold power to account.

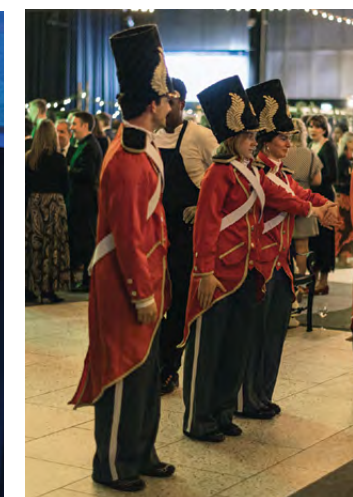
Host committee co-chairs Lise Lotte Hjerrild and Søren Skibsted (pictured right) delivered a warm Danish welcome before foreign minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen (pictured below, far left) turned the spotlight on Greenland. He said the recent agreement between Greenland, Denmark and the US showed that "diplomacy based on international law can actually deliver results".

The next generation also took centre stage. Martin Lavesen, President of the Council of the Danish Bar and Law Society, celebrated the achievements of more than 400 students who participated in the IBA Rule of Law Educational Project. Five film projects were selected for professional production, with the winners receiving a Legora-sponsored trip to Greenland (pictured below right).

Then it was time to party. The Discover Denmark Welcome Party brought Danish flags, performers, music and plenty of opportunities to catch up over drinks – while delegates could even get creative with one of the country's most famous exports, Lego.



A look back at Sunday's jam-packed opening of the IBA Annual Conference – from Prince Zeid's moving keynote to a distinctly Danish welcome party



IBA 2026 Copenhagen

Key sessions to look out for during a week that will set the agenda for global law at the Bella Center from 4-9 October



Thursday

0800 - 0915

Section on Public and Professional Interest (SPPI) awards breakfast

C1 0, Level 0

The annual SPPI awards breakfast will recognise three lawyers for their contributions to human rights, access to justice and the profession. Singapore's Charmaine Yap will receive the IBA Outstanding Young Lawyer Award for her commitment to using the law in the service of justice for vulnerable communities, alongside her professional and academic achievements. Zar Li Aye, a lawyer and human rights defender from Myanmar's Chin Indigenous Community, will receive the IBA Award for Outstanding Contribution by a Legal Practitioner to Human Rights for her work defending human rights, improving access to justice for marginalised groups and pursuing systemic legal reform. Nigerian public interest lawyer Yusuf Temilola Nurudeen will receive the IBA Pro Bono Award in recognition of his sustained commitment to pro bono legal work and improving access to justice in Nigeria.

0930 - 1230

SPPI Showcase: A profession under pressure

B5 1-5, Level 0

The IBA has long championed the importance of the rule of law, but now, perhaps more than ever, it is under intense threat from aggressors. On Thursday morning, the Section on Public and Professional Interest led showcase on a profession under pressure will deconstruct how the legal sector is under constant pressure from all angles, from regulators to artificial intelligence to the erosion of ethical boundaries. Promising to cover how practitioners are managing strain from courtrooms to conflict zones and from boardrooms to government ministries, the session will focus on the difficulties facing those defending the rule of law. A world café round table discussion will precede a panel discussion led by SPPI chair Babatunde Ajibade of SPA Ajibade & Co, Lagos, Nigeria, and SPPI vice chair and treasurer Hanim Hamzah of King & Wood, Beijing, China.

Friday

0930-1545

Rule of Law Symposium

Auditorium 11, Level 1

Organised by the Rule of Law Forum, the annual conference-ending symposium underscores the IBA's commitment to promoting and defending the rule of law worldwide. This year's programme will feature three sessions titled: International peace and global security in a multi-polar world; Not just the rule of law, but a just rule of law; and Lawfare and lawfair in the age of populism. The three sessions will convene leading practitioners, policymakers and academics to debate the challenges facing the rule of law on the global scale and reaffirm the legal profession's vital role in upholding justice and accountability. For those who registered to attend (registration is now closed) the symposium will also consider how lawyers and law can be used as tools of authoritarianism and how justice should inform and guide the rule of law.

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وانجل



Our IBA Team:

Back row (l to r): Mevan Bandara, Shahram Safai, Saurbh Kothari, Chatura Randeniya
Front row (l to r): Bashir Ahmed, Charles Laubach, Danielle Lobo

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Future of Legal Services Commission Global Heatmap Survey 2026

A survey report on the key issues facing the legal profession

Contribute to the Heatmap here:

Ensure your voice is heard throughout the legal profession



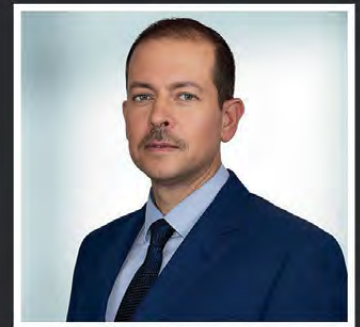
Meet our IBA Team



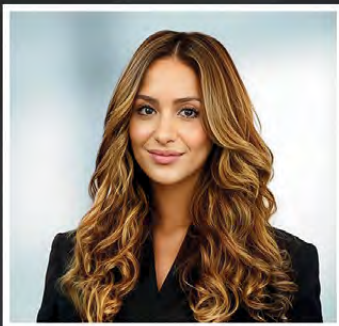
Sadiq Jafar
Managing Partner



Richard Briggs
Executive Partner, Dubai



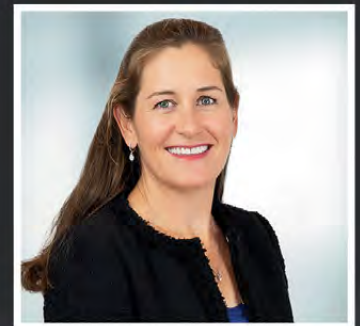
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Executive Partner, Abu Dhabi



Dina Mahdi
Partner | Regulatory & Government Advisory



Walid Azzam
Partner | Dispute Resolution



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